THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

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This newsletter, our last for this year, is scheduled to arrive at your house before Christmas. We hope it finds all of you well, and to everyone we extend

SEASON'S GREETINGS.

In this newsletter we include the following: A new list of sheet music and records available from the Society(Previous lists are superceded); our second Brun Campbell article of our current series; the Title Page and first music page from Treemonisha, which we stated was included in the last newsletter, but which we forgot to include; a list of projects which we hope to inaugurate during 1964; and comments in our usual departments.

'e mentionned in the last newsletter, that it was time to renew the subscription, and these have started to come in. In our explanations of why our subscription year follows the calendar year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) we omitted the fact that those people who start their subscription at any time in the middle of the year are, of course, entitled to receive all the back numbers for that year. It has been our policy to automatically send out all the back numbers on receipt of a new subscription. If by chance any of you did not receive them, please let us know, amd they will be forwarded immediately. If you were one of the few new subscribers who have joined us since the beginning of November, your subscription will continue until the end of 1964.

Cost of subscription renewal is $ 2.00.

Forthcoming events. Thursday, Dec. 26, at 3.00 PM.

Those of you in the Toronto, Buffalo-Rochester area within range of Channel 6, and others on the CBC TV network will be able to see a program primarily based on the activities of the Music Box Society with our charming treasurer, Mrs. Idamay MacInnes, amd her husband Allen. On the show will be seen some of the MacInnes' fabulous collection of music boxes, mechanical singing birds. In our July newsletter, we reprinted a newspaper article on the MacInnes' interest in ragtime and a picture showing their two back-to-back pianos. Some of these one page reprints are still available on request.

SHEET MUSIC:

Treemonisha. (Project 'A' for '64) Considerable interest has been shown in this proposed project, but not sufficient at this writing to justify proceeding with it. We have determined however, that the project is technically feasible and will cost $12.50 per 234 page book. It will require about 3 months to complete, after the decision has be made to proceed with it. This will be your decision to make and since the project, like all Society projects, will be a cooperative, or joint effort, we should hear from you as soon as possible.

Spasm Rag, and Prairie Queen, Tom Shea. Plans are proceeding, and these 2 numbers should be available (back from the printer) early in the new year at our usual $1.00 each postpaid. Those of you who have not yet bought or heard the Society's L.P. of Tom Shea perhaps have wondered about these numbers. They are Tom's own compositions, and were played by him on the record. They are both in the classic tradition, and in the opinion of everyone who has heard them, are among the best ragtime tunes written in the last 40 years.
Spasm Rag is written in C and G, and Prarie Queen in B flat.

Maple Leaf Rag
Original Rags .As announced in the last newsletter, these two reprints with their original front covers will be available at $1.00 each. These will be the first Society editions to have 6 pages..... ie., 12½" x 19" plus an insert page of 12½ x 9½.

Future Society reprints will be of rags that are not contained in 100 Ragtime Classics, selected by Max Morath. From the comments of our subscribers it is obvious that a great number of people buying sheet music have availed themselves of Morath's excellent bargain. We will be glad to supply a list of these 100 rags c request.

FROM OUR READERS:

Bob Ashforth of Toronto says, regarding the masters, " Some Joplin rags are basically melodic in their appeal, others are rhythmic. Some are relatively easy to play, others are very difficult. The great majority of Joplin's rags, however, are melodic and difficult. ('Melodic' does not mean that they are not rhythmic as well, but that the melodic appeal is dominant. Maple Leaf is the ultimate, where the melodic and rhythmic appeals are both tremendously strong, yet neither dominates the other.) Every Joplin rag presents a stern challenge from one aspect or another, whether you are playing it for the first time or the hundredth time.

"The trouble with James Scott is that he appears to have evolved a pattern for his rags and pretty well stuck with it, making each successive rag more difficult - within the pattern - than the last one. No Scott rag that I've seen could be called simple; some are just less difficult than others. He seemed to have had his greatest success when he varied the pattern - as in Climax, Hilarity and Frog Legs, or broke away from it altogether, as in Grace & Beauty, Kansas City and Sunburst.

"Joe Lamb appears to me to have been the master craftsman of the bunch. Almost without exception his rags have a wonderful balance between melody and rhythm. This balance is so ingrained in his rags that they can be slowed down almost to a funeral pace without losing an ounce of either melody or rhythm. They sing and swing at any speed, which can't be said of too many other rags. It's too bad that Lamb wasn't published as prolifically as Joplin or Scott.

"The Wenrich rags are quite simple and rhythmic as hell. They're not steeped in folklore or"trying to say something"- you can rip them off in nothing flat and they're pure, hilarious fun."

Bob also discusses the ragtime waltzes such as Bethena (exquisitely beautiful) and Echoes from the Snowball Club (fascinating), and closes with a request for more Wenrich tunes. We agree. How about you ?

FROM OUR READERS

Ed Corr from Philadelphia asks why we do not talk about George Botsford and Charles Johnson. Dill Pickles and Black & White Rag are both still in print There are 2 versions of Black & White extant, one having a slightly different base. We have not investigated the copyright situations where Botsford and Johnson are concerned, but this is high on the priority list for '64. About 10 years ago, there were several good ragtime folios available in England. We do not know whether they are still available but are investigating. Among them are the following:

Black & White Rag	Red Pepper Rag	Jubilee Rag
Johnson Rag	Haunting Rag	Smash-Up Rag
Powder Rag	Red Rose Rag	Dynamite Rag
Fiddlesticks Rag	Porcupine Rag	That Fussy Rag
Calico Rag	Grizzly Bear Rag	Blue Goose Rag
Russian Rag	Skeleton Rag	That Lovin' Rag
	Black Cat Capers	

The above 3 folios contain quite a few of Johnson and Botsford lesser known rags, and we hope to be able to offer them shortly
We have acquired a few more of the 3/6 folios which contain, among others:

Grace and Beauty Rag
Climax Rag
Hilarity

We recently had a letter from Grove Press stating that both THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME, and THE ART OF JAZZ are now out of print, and there are no plans to reprint them. We have again set our U.K. sleuths to work picking up copies where they can, and will advise of any success.

Many times various people have asked us for a list of other subscribers to the newsletter who lived close to them. We have obliged where possible, but many times we were unable to accomodate. The reason for this is that our address stencils are alphabetical rather than geographical. Starting with this year, however, we will commence a second list, and will be able to provide you with a list of those people in your state or province. If you do not wish to have your name on the geographical list, please let us know.

PROJECT B for '64. We are looking into the possibilities of putting out a small number of E.P. records at 45 RPM. While we do not yet have exact costs it seems likely that these E.P.'s will be in the vicinity of $2.00 and will contain 2 or 3 tunes on each side, depending on whether they are of piano rolls or of live ragtimers. The results of last year's questionnaire which many of you returned indicated that 98% owned 3 speed record players.

PROJECT C for '64. There have been many suggestions that some form of get-together be held in the Toronto area. We made an attempt to organize such a do in May 1962, and again in December of that year. For various reasons, both attempts fell quite flat. We are reluctant to try again, but will be very glad to consider any practical suggestions to this end.

With that suggestion we will close the books on Vol. II. We hope that we will have all of you with us for another year. We hope that you have found in the Ragtime Society what you were seeking...and we hope we have been able to provide it satisfactorily. All criticism and constructive suggestions will be welcomed, and if we can improve, we'll try.

HOW I BECAME . . .

A Pioneer Rag Man OF THE 1890's

S. Brun Campbell *tells* R. J. Carew

There is an old proverb, Arabian I believe, to the effect that a man's fate is hung around his neck like a collar that cannot be removed. All of which amounts to the proposition that we all have a destiny, which at times seems to turn upon trivial incidents, and at other times is the result of momentous decision. It was S. Brun Campbell's destiny to become one of the pioneer ragtime pianists of the 1890's, most of whom have now passed on. Mr. Campbell, however, we still have with us, and he can relate a chain of interesting incidents which finally landed him at the keyboard with his active hands moving rhythmically over the blacks and whites to demonstrate that exciting novelty of the late 1890's and early 1900's,—RAGTIME.

"How did I happen to take up piano playing?" comments Mr. Campbell in a reminiscent mood. "Well, I guess it was because my mother and father were musically inclined. My mother picked a banjo and my father strummed a guitar, and they both sang for their own amusement. We also had an old square piano which interested me, and at an early age I learned to play a one-fingered version of 'The Old Gray Goose Is Dead.'" Here we have an ideal setup for a musical career,—musical parents, a piano and natural aptitude. The fond parents, seeing what young Brun could do with a dead goose, decided to put matters on a more lively basis, so at the age of ten, lessons with a professor were arranged for. "Well," continues Mr. Campbell, "when the professor called at the house a couple of times, and found out how much the old piano needed tuning, he refused to continue with my lessons until the instrument was tuned up. Everything was all right then and we went ahead. In a couple of years I was playing popular songs of the 'gay nineties,' and at the age of fourteen I could play the more difficult music." With this preliminary training and natural interest in music, young Brun was almost certain to become familiar with ragtime, just then beginning to come into popularity.

It was in 1898 that fate introduced S. Brun Campbell to *real* ragtime. He relates that "At about this time a doctor's son and myself ran away from our homes in Kansas, and went to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory, to attend a celebration that was taking place there. We became separated and I wandered into the Armstrong-Byrd Music Store, where I began to play over some of the popular tunes of the day. A crowd began to gather in the store and about the entrance, to listen to the music, and they began to encourage me with applause, and to ask for more. After a time there emerged from the crowd a young mulatto with a light complexion, dressed to perfection and smiling pleasantly. He came over to the piano and placed a pen and ink manuscript of a piece of music in front of me, and asked if I would play it over for him. The manuscript was titled the MAPLE LEAF RAG by Scott Joplin. I went over the piece for him, and he seemed to be struck by the way I played it. (He afterwards told me that I had made just two mistakes.) It turned out that the mulatto was Otis Saunders, a fine pianist and composer of ragtime music, and one of its first great pioneers. From Saunders I learned that Scott Joplin, also a Negro, was located at that time in Sedalia, Missouri."

After the Oklahoma episode, young Campbell got back to his home in Kansas, but a roaming propensity and a newly awakened interest in ragtime prompted him to run away again, this time to Sedalia, Missouri, where he lost no time in seeking out Scott Joplin, then playing piano in a tavern there. Joplin and Saunders were piano playing pals, and the town seemed to be a sort of a Mecca for Negro players, probably because of its convenient location between St. Louis and Kansas City. Campbell relates "I persuaded Joplin to teach me ragtime, and with his coaching I was the first white pianist to play his MAPLE LEAF RAG and other early rags. I became a kid ragtime pianist, and met almost all of the early Negro pianists and composers of ragtime of the 1890's, such great musicians as Tom Turpin, Scott Joplin, Otis Saunders, Scott Hayden, James Scott, Arthur Marshall, Louis Chauvin, Tony Williams, Tony Jackson, Melford Alexander, Jelly Roll Morton, Ida Hastings (a Negress), and 'Ink' Howard. I am 63 years old and I seem to be the last of the original 'rag men' alive. I am very proud of the fact that I could call these Negro musicians my friends, and to recall that I was the first white ragtime pianist, pioneering with the Negro rag men in those early ragtime days."

In the lusty rough and ready days around the turn of the century there was a demand for lively music, and a good ragtime pianist could travel where he pleased. Touching on this point, Mr. Campbell states: "I played all through the Midwest and Southern states: in honky tonks, road houses, pool halls, saloons, confectioneries, stores, theatres, hotels, restaurants, steamboats on the Ohio and Mississippi, and about every place a pianist could play. I was known by many nicknames, such as 'The Ragtime Kid,' 'The Original Ragtime Kid,' 'The Dude,' 'The Indian Kid,' 'Kid Campbell' and 'Brunnie Campbell.' In my travels as an early ragtime pianist up to the year 1908, I played for many notable persons, such as Governor Ferguson of the Indian Territory in 1900, at his home in Watonga; Buffalo Bill (W. C. Cody) at Guthrie, Oklahoma, and Wichita, Kansas; Pawnee Bill (Gordon Lillie) at his ranch at Pawnee, Oklahoma, and at El Reno, Oklahoma, in 1900; Bat Materson at Wichita, Kansas (the old United States Marshal of the roaring Dodge City days); Al Terril, old stage coach driver of the old Wild West days, who later owned a saloon in Kansas. I also had the interesting experience of playing for these notorious outlaws after they had been released from prison: Cole Younger of the Younger and James gang, for whom I played twice, once at Tulsa, Oklahoma, and at Independence, Missouri, where he got religion and died a Christian gentleman; Emmet Dalton, last of the Dalton gang, at Tulsa, Oklahoma; and also the Indian outlaw, Henry Starr."

Minstrel shows were still going strong in the early 1900's, and it is not surprising that Brun Campbell had his opportunity in that field also. He has satisfaction in recalling that "I had auditions with Honey Boy Evans and Lew Dockstader, and would have been a featured Ragtime Act with their great minstrels if we could have got together on my salary." Brun can't surmise at this late date what might have happened had he come to terms with the minstrels; perhaps it might have been "The Ragtime Kid," instead of Les Copeland, who was to play Joplin ragtime for the King of England. Be that as it may, he has no regrets, and tells us "I want to assure you that my life as an early ragtime pianist was exciting in more ways than one."

Well, the free and easy days of the old rag men are gone forever, but the music they developed and spread throughout the country remains a vital element in American music. It can be distorted and diluted, but it can't be suppressed. It is a pleasure to note that, here and there, we find a group of earnest musicians who have discovered that simon pure ragtime is mighty enjoyable and well worth playing. At the Dawn Club in San Francisco, Lu Watters and his Yerba Buena Jazz Band have demonstrated that genuine ragtime is a paying proposition. Not long ago Brun Campbell taught Tom Turpin's HARLEM RAG to Lu Watters' outfit, and that early St. Louis classic has now been recorded. Better still, Watters and Campbell have collaborated on a RAG TIME ALBUM, which at this writing is just about to be issued. In the piano solos by Campbell and band numbers by Watters' boys, we feel sure that we have some mighty good listening coming.